



News Release

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New state tobacco tax expected to increase attempts to quit smoking

Tobacco Quit Line offers free resources to help people kick the habit and save money

OLYMPIA — A new tobacco tax passed by the Washington State Legislature takes effect on May 1, raising the tax on a pack of cigarettes by one dollar. Tax on other tobacco products goes up by similar amounts. The higher tax and resulting price increase is expected to encourage more adults to quit and discourage young people from starting.

“Raising tobacco prices is one of the most effective ways to reduce smoking,” said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. “Quitting smoking improves a person’s health within hours, and saves money, too. A pack-a-day smoker who quits will save nearly \$2,500 a year. Our Tobacco Quit Line is there to help.”

The Department of Health’s free Tobacco Quit Line (1-800-QUIT-NOW; 1-877-2NO-FUME in Spanish) received an unprecedented number of calls after last year’s federal tobacco tax increase. In just one month, calls increased three-fold. The agency expects to see a similar spike when the new state tax takes effect Saturday.

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and other public health organizations estimate that in Washington, the state’s tobacco tax increase will prompt about 19,000 adults to quit smoking and prevent about twice as many kids from taking up the habit. The expected decrease could save lives and money — more than \$854 million in healthcare costs.

[The Tobacco Quit Line](http://www.quitline.com/) (www.quitline.com/) is a key part of the state’s effort to reduce tobacco use. Callers talk to quit coaches who are often former smokers themselves. Coaches help them recognize their smoking triggers and develop a personal plan to quit. All state residents can receive some level of free quit support by calling the quit line. Medicaid subscribers can receive additional help, including prescription medication, if appropriate.

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The adult smoking rate in Washington has dropped more than 30 percent since the state began its Tobacco Prevention and Control Program in 2000. There are now 295,000 fewer people smoking in the state and an estimated 98,000 people will be spared early, tobacco-related deaths. The decline in smoking will save an estimated \$2.8 billion in future health care costs.

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